

1820

182

ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE  
ARTILLERY COMPANY.

---

REPORT.

THE Committee of the ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY, who were appointed "to inquire into the expediency of adopting measures to fill up the ranks of the company, and to consider the propriety of varying its uniform in such a manner, as that every officer in commission, being a member of the company, may appear in the uniform of his commission;" have attended to their instructions, and ask leave to lay before the company the result of their inquiries, and the opinions they have adopted.

The diversity of sentiment, which it was well known existed among the members of the committee, at the time of their appointment, and their unanimity upon the proposition, which they have agreed to submit to the company for its adoption, will naturally induce the supposition, that the subject has been thoroughly examined, and has undergone a full, free, and candid discussion. It is, therefore, perhaps unnecessary to remark, that the committee have had several meetings, which have been fully attended, in which such considerations were suggested, as were viewed as important by those who urged them, and which, it was thought, would have weight on the minds of other members of the company. The committee, desirous, if so great a change as was contemplated, should be made in the appearance of the company, that a correspondent effect should be produced in the community, have also unofficially conferred with some of the most influential members of the Civil Government of the State, and with many military

A



officers, who are not now members of the company. In having done this, they feel confident that they will not be considered as having transcended their powers. For on the one hand, the committee agreed, that let public opinion be what it might, their duty as members of the company required, that no proposition should be submitted, which, for want of a general acquiescence among its members, might interrupt its harmony if adopted; and on the other, that it would be useless, let the company be ever so well united in it to propose any change in the by-law, for the purpose of filling up its ranks, which should not make a favourable impression on the community. Besides, the committee considered the public as having a direct interest in the question; for the company have never regarded themselves as a private association, claiming particular privileges for their own advantage; but, as a public institution, invested with the greatest powers, for the advancement of the most important public benefits. In this light the institution was viewed by the original grantees, and those who have succeeded them, have so estimated it, to the present time. The four persons, named in the charter, were public spirited characters, living in the towns of Boston, Charlestown, Cambridge and Dorchester, who solicited a charter, so that they and others associated together, might be able to yield to the public those services, which as individuals, they could not render. From the preamble of the charter, it is to be inferred, that the grantees were members of different companies, who were desirous of advancing the military art by introducing an uniformity of discipline throughout the Province, and for that purpose, "desired the license of the Court to join themselves in one company." It also appears, that their petition was viewed in so favourable a light by the government, that their request was not only complied with; but, that the authority of appointing its officers was expressly relinquished by the General Court and Council, and the power of choosing them granted to the company.—Such a privilege as this would not have been conferred by an arbitrary govern-

ment, but upon such individuals, as the government itself leaned upon for support. The *extent of the confidence of the Council in them*, is to be inferred, as well from the elective privilege aforementioned, as from the authority which was given to them, to assemble in any town within the jurisdiction. Their *military standing and importance* is to be deduced, from the fact, that their services in the companies to which they belonged were considered so indispensable, that those were ordered not to assemble on the days established for the company meeting. It would seem also from the prohibition upon towns not to hold their meetings upon the days of the company training, that the grantees and their associates, were not only of importance, as military men; but, that like those who, now, usually sustain military offices, they were persons possessed of important useful influence in the political concerns of the country. Surely great value must have been attached to an institution, to which was given such high and unusual privileges, and to which was added a grant of land, to aid it in the accomplishment of its public objects.

The patriotic spirit evinced by the founders of the company, has since exhibited itself in various periods of its history. This was successfully appealed to by Gov. Bowdoin, who at the time of the insurrection in 1786, when the militia was entirely disorganized, "applied to the company for their aid in the present emergency of public affairs, and solicited that they would find gentlemen to accept of the command of the several companies in the town of Boston, which was done; and the gentlemen recommended accepted their appointments." The company, also, unanimously voted "to do every thing in their power in support of the government of the Commonwealth, and to hold themselves in readiness on the shortest notice to turn out in defence of the same;" not only so, but they completely equipped themselves for immediate service, and as their record says, "had the honour of leading in the military duties of the then important day." Their conduct on



that, and several other occasions, was highly exemplary, and it is with no small degree of pride and pleasure, in looking over the rolls and records of the company, that the committee find, that those who have succeeded to the immunities and honours of the original grantees, have been possessed of similar influence and character. Such persons will ever spurn to hold exclusive powers which they cannot beneficially use, and will not be forgetful of their duties when they claim privileges. That such has ever been the case, is evident from its history; and its records discover that its utility has been the foundation of the continued patronage of the government, shewn to it, in additional grants of land by the Legislature; their remission of taxes on its property; and the distinguished honours annually conferred on it by the Executive.

The charter of the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company, contains principles which are now considered as vital, in our political institutions.

The annual election of its company officers, from the highest to the lowest, and their return to the ranks, obeying the will of their successors in authority, at the expiration their term of service, is an archetype of the elective rights guaranteed to us by the charter of our civil government; and from the practice of this company in the choice of its officers for a century and an half, our statesmen were convinced, that by extending the elective franchise to the militia, its strength, influence, and respectability would be increased. Their wisdom has been proved in both cases. The elective principle as applicable to civil rulers, has been adopted in every state; but those, who had never seen the principle of the election of military officers practically illustrated, nor witnessed its salutary effects, retained the power of appointment in the executive authority. However correct this principle may be considered in theory; in practice, it has been found, that these, as well as other appointments, have frequently become the subject of political intrigue; and when that has not been the case, that instead of the elections being made, by those who

are directly interested in the choice, appointments are given to unworthy candidates, upon the irresponsible recommendations of those, who are ignorant of their merits and qualifications. The elective principle as applied to military officers, may be reckoned among the chief causes, why men of more *distinction and intelligence* have accepted of commands in the militia of this state, than in others where it is not admitted, and consequently, why we have a *better militia*, than in those, where the officers are appointed by the *executive* authority.

The reverence which is felt for one of the first establishments of our ancestors, the particular advantage which the country has derived from it, and its general influence, the committee think, will ever cause its charter to be respected; while the pride of character which distinguishes its members, they hope will prevent it from degenerating into an institution of useless ceremony, for the amusement of holiday admirers. Though this should not be the effect of design; it might arise from that inertness in its members, which would content itself with upholding the company to its former respectable footing, notwithstanding the public exhibitions of other companies should demonstrate, that its *relative importance* was lost.

The condition of the company in every respect, the committee have found to be as good, as it has been for several years back; but it would be in vain for them to disguise the fact, that others not possessed of the same advantages have illustrated in their public exhibitions, the rapid progress of military science in the country. Is there no danger then, that soon we shall find it difficult to fill up our ranks with those, who are ambitious of military honours; and that such distinguished persons, who have heretofore hoped to be of some use to their country in this, after they have become exempted from military duty, by length of service in other corps, will find no adequate motive for joining it. When this shall be the case, will dwindle into insignificance, the institution, which contains in its charter,



the germ of our republican system of government ; and which, so long as it holds any place in the public estimation, will be venerated for its antiquity, and the wisdom of its founders.

To preserve its charter, and make the ranks of the company, objects of the ambition of those who are elevated by rank and intelligence, it is necessary that its manœuvres and discipline should advance with the progress of military science.

The company should have, for its chief objects, the attainment and diffusion of military knowledge. It should be able to teach the learned and instruct the skilful. It is denominated "the Military Company of Massachusetts ;" and as such, it should take and keep the lead of all the military companies and associations in the state ; and on its days of election, and public parade, it should exhibit, as they are discovered, all new improvements in exercise and manœuvres. It should be the tribunal, to which all officers should appeal, for correct decisions upon theoretical points ; and soldiers for practical illustrations of them. When the company shall aim at these objects ; it may be presumed, that the increased share of public attention, which it will receive, will be usefully bestowed ; and that the officers of all grades, and corps of the militia, will be desirous of joining it ; and thus as a school of officers, it will have an important influence in producing an uniformity of drill and discipline in all the divisions of the state.

The committee are of opinion, that a company so much signalized as this is for its antiquity and privileges, should also be proportionably distinguished for its extent, knowledge and discipline : whereas, they are constrained to acknowledge, that the company though unlimited in its numbers by its charter, does not contain on its roll more active members, than those volunteer companies in the militia, which within a few years have so much distinguished themselves for their military attainments.

Among the reasons why the company roll is not larg-

er, it is thought, the bye-law prohibiting the admission of any person into it, who is not twenty-one years old, may be reckoned. Although some might doubt the expediency of the measure ; yet, if those, who, upon their arrival at the age of 18 years, were admissible as members in this, as well as in other volunteer companies, it is highly probable, that many of those ambitious and intelligent young men, who then commence their military career in other companies, might be desirous of joining this, and that the ranks of our company would be filled, as well as others. That they do not afterwards quit them, and unite with us, is not remarkable, for in three years their habits of association and discipline, not only become fixed ; but, if they joined us afterwards, they would be obliged to lay aside their old uniform, and provide themselves with that prescribed by our rules.—Your committee do not, however, intend to recommend any alteration of this by-law, other than, as it regards the admissibility of militia officers into the company ; as they believe, if the proposed alteration in the company rules should be as successful as they hope it will be, in inducing the *officers* in the militia to join the company, that there will be no difficulty in obtaining the full number of *private recruits*, which it is entitled to enlist by its charter.

There are two principal reasons, besides the preceding, which your committee believe have operated to prevent the enlargement of the company roll, to the desired extent. The first is, that other companies discover more ambition and military ardour than ours, which is composed of older men, who do not possess their activity of muscular action, and who have served so long, as to have lost the excitement of novelty. The 2d, that the company, as at present conducted, does not offer sufficient attractions to those, who are thus advanced in age, as well as in military experience, to induce them to purchase new uniforms, and subject themselves in addition, to the payment of a heavy annual assessment. Upon these objections, the committee were of opinion, that if the second can be removed,



as many younger men would become members of the company, its *espriet du corps* would, of itself, be sufficient to obviate the first.

The committee were also united in the opinion, that the proposed plan, by increasing the numbers of the company, would reduce the amount of the annual assessments on its members. But before recommending its adoption, they beg the attention of the company to a consideration of greater weight, in their own minds, than the foregoing. This arises from the prospect the proposed plan affords of making the company a mean of great public utility, as a school of instruction and of discipline, to all the respectable officers of the militia, who choose to join it. Militia commissions are frequently conferred on those who would gladly avail themselves of the means of information the company would thus afford, and many would heartily unite with their brother officers, in acquiring the information they need, who otherwise would not have it in their power to obtain it.

Your committee will not take up the time of the company to discuss the public advantages, which would arise from establishments, for the drilling of officers.—As those are well known, it is sufficient for them to observe, that in almost every petition, which has been presented to the General Court, for the amendment of the militia law, this has been enumerated among the most important of those which have been named. The popular sentiment, therefore, as well as the sound judgment of the community, is in favor of such a modification of it. The company, according to the spirit of their charter, may anticipate the amendment of the law, by making the company what it was designed to be at its institution, *a school of, and for officers*, with confidence, that its efforts will be encouraged by the Legislature. But to make it as extensively useful, as its powers admit, the objection of many officers, which arises from the expense of providing a new uniform, and paying a considerable annual assessment besides, must be obviated. For it cannot be supposed, by any

one, that if the General Court should adopt any plan for drilling the officers of the militia, either in regiments or brigades, that they would require them to provide a separate uniform for the purpose. On the contrary, it cannot be doubted that they would permit them to exercise in the uniforms which are worn by them in their respective corps and offices, as is now practised by several voluntary associations for the purpose. If a similar principle is not therefore adopted by us, it must be obvious, that a great proportion of very meritorious officers, who are at as much expense to maintain the respectability of their situations in the volunteer companies in the militia, as their finances will allow of, will be unable to join it; and the very object which the company has in view, to obtain the advantage of their acquirements in military knowledge, and their zeal in displaying it, will be defeated.

But although these general principles were admitted to be applicable to the subject: yet, when the committee first entered upon its consideration, some particular objections occurred, which made them doubtful of the expediency of adopting the proposition. A fear was entertained, that if the uniform of the company was changed, the identity of the company would be lost to the public; and it was observed that though such changes might be becoming in younger institutions; yet, as the dignity of ours, consisted in its antiquity, its distinguishing characteristic by a change of uniform would be lost. But as the company have already had four, and as it is supposed, six different uniforms, it was concluded, (inasmuch as the plan proposed to be adopted, as an inducement for the officers of other corps to join it, is predicated upon the saving of expense to them, while the old members subject themselves to no expense or inconvenience even, in the mode proposed for effecting it) that the objection weighed less against the proposed alteration in this, than it would against a change of uniform in any other company.

There was also another objection, arising from the singularity of the appearance which the company would



present if the plan was adopted, which occurred to almost every one, upon its first promulgation. The universality of this objection induced the committee to give it much thought themselves, and those who urged it, time for its consideration. And they are happy to be able to inform the company, that the minds of all the members of the committee, not only ; but, of all others whom they have consulted, and who have maturely considered the plan, have become reconciled to it.

The company, it is supposed, was first uniformed in 1738, and for a long time, it was the only uniformed company in the state. In 1772, when they adopted a new uniform, considering themselves as a company of officers, they had distinct regard and reference to that worn by the militia. And in 1810, the uniform then worn was entirely laid aside, and that which was established for the field and company officers of the militia infantry, upon the same principle of convenience and accommodation was adopted by the company. In searching its history your committee have, besides these, found continued instances of a disposition in the company to meet the views and wishes of the militia officers, who until within a few years back, it must be inferred from the records, have had the principal regulation of the company affairs. In illustrating this remark, we might cite the record to shew, that the field officers of the Boston regiment used to be appointed members of the regular standing committee of the company, as frequently, as its own officers are now ; and that in one instance a committee was appointed "to wait upon the field officers of the regiment, to know if they, either of them, would take the command of the company the ensuing year." This vote was passed in 1773, and shews, that until that time, at least, the company was chiefly composed of militia officers—Since that period, very great changes have taken place in our military, as well as civil institutions—Our militia is not now confined to Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry corps; but, Light Infantry, Grenadier, Rifle, and Sea Fencible companies have been established, and incorporated with it, by law.

As these are composed of such as voluntarily enlist into them, they are generally distinguished for the beauty of their dress, the excellence of their discipline, and the extent of their military attainments. Can any good reason be offered then, why the officers of these companies as well as others, should not be admitted into the company, without being at the expense of providing new uniforms.—The committee know of none ; and from personal communications had with many of them they believe, that most, if not all of them, who reside in the capital and neighborhood, would join it, if they could be admitted, upon terms of equality with others. Not only so, but many of the officers of the cavalry and artillery, and the staff officers of the different corps would be able and willing to join the company ; and some of those, who, by having been admitted into it as honorary members, now seem to be excluded from its active duties, the committee learn with pleasure will solicit permission to appear in its ranks. Thus the company would not only be filled and enlarged ; but a competition among those, who are emulous to excel each other, would be excited between the officers of different corps, which would increase its spirit, respectability and usefulness.

The objection under consideration, arising from the singularity of the appearance, which the company would present, it is admitted, might be urged with great propriety against any other company than this ; for they consist principally of *privates* ; whereas, this is principally composed of *officers*. This distinguishing feature of our institution, never should be lost sight of, in the consideration of this subject ; as it is this only which makes the proposition at all admissible. But composed as it is, we can see no reason why it should not appear to be, what it is denominated, a "Company of Officers ;" and why by its appearance, as well as its charter, it should not be distinguished from all other incorporated companies.

Other objections were made against details of the plan, which, it was supposed, the adoption of the pro-



position would necessarily involve, but which the committee think, are so entirely disconnected with the subject, that they do not bring them distinctly, before the company for their consideration.

Under the general head of authority given to your committee to enquire into the "expediency of any measures that it is adviseable for the company to adopt to advance the interest, promote the honor, and increase the number of the members of the company," they have taken into consideration various projects which have been suggested for the purposes mentioned. There is one only, however, in which the committee are united in opinion, which is, that after the present year, the squad meetings of the company at the houses of the officers and non-commissioned officers, which have been found to be both expensive and troublesome should be dispensed with.

Upon the whole then, as the committee upon mature consideration, of the proposition submitted to them for examination, can see no objection to it, of any great weight; and as they believe the adoption of it, will be attended with great advantage to the company, by enlarging its numbers, and increasing its respectability; by making the ranks of the company an object of ambition to the elevated, and producing a spirit of emulation among its members; by adding to its influence in the community, and of course, making it more deserving of the consideration of the government; they are unanimously of opinion, that the proposition submitted to their consideration should be adopted, and that the following alterations in the rules and regulations of the company should accordingly be made.

Members of the company who hold, or who have held commissions in the militia, may appear in the uniform of their respective offices; provided, that the commissioned officers of the company only shall be permitted to wear in it the insignia of their militia offices.

The number of officers of the company shall be pro-

portioned to the number of its active members, and shall be fixed previous to the election of officers annually.

The members of the company shall wear a herring bone, or the number of them, to which they are entitled by the rules of the company, at all times, on their military coats, as a badge of membership.

Officers of the militia, though under the age of twenty one years, may be admitted into the company as members.

All which is most respectfully submitted.

GEORGE WELLES, *Commander.*

JOHN L. PHILLIPS, *Lieutenant.*

JOHN PARK, *Ensign.*

JAMES PHILLIPS.

ARNOLD WELLES.

WILLIAM SULLIVAN.

W. H. SUMNER.

WILLIAM HOWE.

BENJAMIN LORING.

JOSEPH JENKINS.

JOHN DODD.

NATHANIEL RICHARDS.

THOMAS WELLS.

JAMES N. STAPLES.

JAMES RUSSELL.

ZACH. G. WHITMAN.



## COMPANY ORDERS.

*Boston, August 24th, 1820.***Z. G. WHITMAN, Clerk,**

IN pursuance of the instructions of the committee, you are hereby ordered to cause the foregoing report to be printed, together with this order; and the Sergeants will deliver to each Honorary and Active Member a copy thereof, at least one week before the day of the meeting to hear and consider the same. You will also cause all the members aforesaid to be notified to meet at Faneuil Hall, in Boston, on Wednesday the sixth day of September next, at 3 o'clock, P. M. to receive and act upon said report. You will enjoin punctuality upon the members; and it is earnestly desired that every member will attentively examine the report, and come prepared candidly to discuss and vote upon a subject of so much interest and consequence to the company.

**GEORGE WELLES, Commander.***Boston, August 25th, 1820.*

IN compliance with the foregoing Company Orders, you are hereby requested to meet at Faneuil Hall, on Wednesday the 6th day of September next, at 3 o'clock, P. M. for the purposes therein expressed. As the business of the meeting is to act upon an important alteration of the By-Laws, it is expected that every member will give his punctual and early attendance.

*Clerk.*